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Cultures of trust: Effects of avatar faces and reputation scores on German and Arab players in an online trust-game

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Abstract: Reputation systems as well as seller depictions (photos; avatars) have been shown to reduce buyer uncertainty and to foster trust in online trading. With the emergence of globalized e-markets, it remains an urgent question whether these mechanisms, found to be effective for Western cultures, also apply to other cultures. Hypothesizing that members of collectivistic cultures in contrast to those of individualistic cultures would rely more on visual social cues (seller faces) than on factual information (reputation scores), we compared buying decisions of Arab and German participants in an experimental trust game. Photo-realistic avatars were used instead of photos to control facial features and expressions. The results revealed significant main effects for both reputation scores and avatar faces. Moreover, both variables significantly affected the purchase behavior of Arab as well as German buyers, suggesting cross-cultural universals in the processing of trust cues. The results have implications for future cross-cultural studies in e-commerce as well as the design of online markets and shared virtual environments.

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Correction

Correction: Cultures of Trust: Effects of Avatar Faces and Reputation Scores on German and Arab Players in an Online Trust-Game

The *PLOS ONE* Staff

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This article was republished on August 7, 2014, to replace incorrectly changed characters in the byline and citation. The publisher apologizes for the errors. Please download this article again to view the correct version. The originally published, uncorrected article and the republished, corrected article are provided here for reference.

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Reference

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